

Turkmenistan



Sunni Muslims

Turkmenistan imposes strict registration requirements for all religious activity and bans private religious education and worship. Sunni Muslims engaging in unregistered religious activities—even if conducted outside of Turkmenistan—face decades in prison for anti-state activities. Prisoners of conscience are often forcibly disappeared in the state’s prison system and subjected to harsh living conditions, including starvation and torture.



Myratdurdy Shamyradov

RELIGION OR BELIEF:
Sunni Muslim
ARRESTED:
May/June 2017
SENTENCE:
12 Years’ Imprisonment
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:
Meeting with others to study the writings of Said Nursi



Bahram Saparov

RELIGION OR BELIEF:
Sunni Muslim
ARRESTED:
March 9, 2013
SENTENCE:
15 Years’ Imprisonment
REPORTS OF TORTURE:
Yes
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:
Leading an unregistered religious community



Jumanazar Hojambetov

RELIGION OR BELIEF:
Sunni Muslim
ARRESTED:
May/June 2017
SENTENCE:
12 Years’ Imprisonment
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:
Meeting with others to study the writings of Said Nursi



Kakadjan Halbaev

RELIGION OR BELIEF:
Sunni Muslim
ARRESTED:
February 6, 2018
SENTENCE:
15 Years’ Imprisonment
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:
Discussing religion with Turkmen citizens in Russia



Kemal Saparov

RELIGION OR BELIEF:
Sunni Muslim
ARRESTED:
January 25, 2018
SENTENCE:
15 Years’ Imprisonment
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:
Discussing religion with Turkmen citizens in Russia



Annamurad Atdaev

RELIGION OR BELIEF:
Sunni Muslim
ARRESTED:
September 27, 2016
SENTENCE:
15 Years’ Imprisonment
REASON FOR PERSECUTION:
Studying Islam at al-Azhar University in Egypt

Jehovah’s Witnesses

Jehovah’s Witnesses have not been granted registration in Turkmenistan and are therefore unable to operate legally. The government arrests and imprisons many Witnesses for their conscientious objection to military service, for which there is no civilian alternative available. In 2021, all imprisoned Jehovah’s Witnesses were pardoned and released from prison, but the threat of arrest and imprisonment remains without changes to law.

FoRB Victims List Stats 30 out of 2,125

Religion or Belief	# of Victims	Type of Abuse	# of Victims
Jehovah’s Witness	21	Imprisoned	28
Sunni	9	Detained	2
Total	30	Total	30

Average Prison Sentence 5 Years, 4 Months

Reports of	# of Victims
Torture	2
Medical Neglect	0
Total	2

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Frank R. Wolf FoRB Victims List Background

The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA), as amended by the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2016, requires USCIRF to:

make publicly available, to the extent practicable...lists of persons it determines are imprisoned or detained, have disappeared, been placed under house arrest, been tortured, or subjected to forced renunciation of faith for their religious activity or religious freedom advocacy by the government of a foreign country that the Commission recommends for designation as a country of particular concern [CPC]...or by a nonstate actor that the Commission recommends for designation as an entity of particular concern [EPC].

USCIRF developed the Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Victims List—an online public database—to implement this provision for countries USCIRF recommends for Country of Particular Concern (CPC) or Special Watch List (SWL) status. The list also includes such victims located in the de facto territories of nonstate actors that USCIRF recommends for Entity of Particular Concern (EPC) status, according to the same criteria.

Due to limited resources, USCIRF is unable to identify and document all victims that meet the statutory requirement to be included on the FoRB Victims List and generally relies on receiving submissions from outside individuals and organizations. As such, the information contained in the database does not reflect country, regional, or global trends. Furthermore, percentages highlighted in this section should not be used for extrapolation purposes nor interpreted as a particular group experiencing greater violations than another or a particular country committing violations at a greater rate than others. To support this project, USCIRF invites those with credible information on victims to submit information using the Victims List Intake Form at www.uscirtf.gov/form/uscirtf-victims-list-intake-form.

FoRB Victims List Stats Overall

Perpetrator	Victims Documented
Algeria	5
Azerbaijan	11
Burma	5
China	770
Cuba	11
Egypt	18
Eritrea	50
Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)	2
Houthis	3
India	55
Indonesia	8
Iran	339
Iraq	2
Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP)	1
Kazakhstan	15
Malaysia	4
Nicaragua	15
Nigeria	9
North Korea	9
Pakistan	90
Russia	449
Saudi Arabia	46
Sri Lanka	1
Tajikistan	13
Turkmenistan	30
Uzbekistan	87
Vietnam	77
Total	2,125

Religion or Belief	Victims Documented
Adivasi	1
Baha'i	163
Bon	1
Buddhist – Hoa Hao	6
Buddhist – Theravada	3
Buddhist – Tibetan	76
Buddhist – Unspecified/Other	28
Christian – Catholic	46
Christian – Church of Almighty God	236
Christian – Jehovah's Witness	258
Christian – Orthodox	17
Christian – Protestant	130
Christian – Unspecified/Other	66
Duong Van Minh	4
ECKist (Eckankar)	1
Erfan-e Halgheh Practitioner	2
Falun Gong	213
Hindu	10
Humanist	1
Jewish	1
Muslim – Ahmadiyya	23
Muslim – Qur'anist	1
Muslim – Shi'a	39
Muslim – Sufi	63
Muslim – Sunni	385
Muslim – Unspecified/Other	237
Santeria	5
Scientologist	1
Shaman	1
Sikh	1
Yarsani	37
Unknown/Unspecified	69
Total	2,125

Turkmenistan



Not Released

Annamurad Atdaev
Bahram Saparov
Ahmet Mammedurdyew
Begejik Begejikow
Jumanazar Hojambetow
Kakadjan Halbaev
Kemal Saparov
Meret Owezow
Myratdurdy Shamyradow

Released

Azamatjan Narkulyev
Azat Ashirov
Bahram Hemdemov
Bahtiyar Atahanov
David Petrosov
Eziz Atabayev
Gurbangylych Muhammetgulyyev
Ikhlosbek Rozmetov
Isa Sayayev
Kamiljan Ergashov
Kerven Kakabayev
Maksat Jumadurdiyev
Mekan Annayev
Muhammedali Saparmuradov
Ruslan Artykmuradov
Selim Taganov
Serdar Atayev
Serdar Dovletov
Sokhbet Agamyradov
Veniamin Genjiyev
Vepa Matyakubov